

Message Text

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TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 243 - JANUARY 31, 1977

NOT RELEASABLE TO FOREIGN NATIONALS

1. LEBANON. THE ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO BE HIGHLY CONCERNED OVER THE SYRIAN DEPLOYMENT LAST WEEKEND OF A REINFORCED BATTALION IN THE NABATIYA AREA. THE ISRAELI CABINET MET YESTERDAY TO DISCUSS THE SOUTH LEBANON SITUATION. AS AN INDICATION THAT THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT IS DISCUSSING POSSIBLE MILITARY OPTIONS SHOULD THE SITUATION DETERIORATE, IDF CHIEF OF STAFF MORDECHAI GUR PUT IN AN UNUSUAL APPEARANCE AT THE CABINET SESSION.

2. THUS FAR, WE HAVE NO INFORMATION TO INDICATE THAT THE SYRIAN FORCES IN THE NABATIYA AREA HAVE ATTEMPTED TO MOVE FURTHER SOUTHWARD OR HAVE BEEN REINFORCED. NEITHER
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CAN WE NOW SUBSTANTIATE UNCONFIRMED ISRAELI INFORMATION THAT ARAB SECURITY FORCE (ASF) UNITS HAD MOVED INTO TYRE.

3. POSSIBLY IN RESPONSE TO SIGNS OF ISRAELI NERVOUSNESS OVER THE SYRIAN PRESENCE NEAR NABATIYA, THE SYRIANS MAY

HAVE BEGUN CALLING UP RESERVE PERSONNEL ON JANUARY 27 OR 28. OUR DAMASCUS DEFENSE ATTACHE REPORTED THAT THE CALL-UP MAY BE EXTENSIVE. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT IT IS LIKELY A PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE, GIVEN THE CURRENTLY WEAKENED SYRIAN PRESENCE ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. BY CALLING UP RESERVISTS, THE SYRIANS MAY HAVE DECIDED TO REINFORCE THEIR UNITS IN THE GOLAN AND THUS IMPROVE THEIR DEFENSIVE POSTURE THERE.

4. MEANWHILE, SARKIS CONFERRED WITH THE QUADRIPARTITE SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE FOR 2 HOURS YESTERDAY ON THE SOUTHERN LEBANON SITUATION. FOLLOWING THE MEETING, THE KUWAITI REPRESENTATIVE ON THE COMMITTEE STATED THAT THE ENTRY OF ASF TROOPS INTO THE SOUTH WAS "IN THE INTERESTS OF LEBANON AND THE ARABS." ALTHOUGH NO RESULTS OF THE SESSION WERE ANNOUNCED, THIS LATTER STATEMENT MAY INDICATE THAT SARKIS FAVORS LEAVING THE SYRIAN UNITS IN THE NABATIYA AREA AS A MEANS OF CONTROLLING THE PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS TO SOME EXTENT. IN THIS REGARD. SARKIS MET WITH ARAFAT AND OTHER PALESTINIAN LEADERS LAST NIGHT, REPORTEDLY TO EXPLAIN THE "STEPS AGREED UPON" AT THE QUADRIPARTITE COMMITTEE MEETING. (SECRET/NOFORN)

5. EGYPT. A REVIEW OF RECENT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS STRONGLY INDICATES, THAT THE JANUARY 18-19 RIOTS WERE A SPONTANEOUS EXPLOSION OF FRUSTRATIONS AND DISCONTENT OF THE URBAN MASSES. ALTHOUGH THE TRIGGER WAS THE JANUARY 17 REMOVAL OF THE COMMODITY PRICE SUBSIDIES, THE BASIC UNDERLYING CAUSES WERE:

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--THE DETERIORATING ECONOMIC SITUATION;

--WIDESPREAD CORRUPTION;

--THE GOVERNMENT'S FAILURE TO MEET THE EXPECTATIONS IT HAS RAISED;

--THE DISPARITY OF WEALTH (WHICH WAS NOT AS OBVIOUS UNDER NASSER); AND,

--THE GOVERNMENT'S POOR RECORD IN MEETING THE NEEDS OF THE URBAN POOR.

6. IT IS BELIEVED THAT, AS A RESULT SADAT HAS SUFFERED HIS FIRST MAJOR DOMESTIC LOSS IN PRESTIGE SINCE THE OCTOBER WAR. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN, HOWEVER, IF THE DAMAGE IS SERIOUS OR PERMANENT. MASSIVE FOREIGN AID IS NEEDED TO RESTORE CONFIDENCE, BUT MONEY ALONE CANNOT

REVERSE THE TREND. SADAT MUST SHOW THE SAME DECISIVE LEADERSHIP ON DOMESTIC ISSUES HE DEMONSTRATED IN DEALING WITH HIS RIVALS IN MAY 1971 AND THAT HE CONTINUALLY DEMONSTRATES IN FOREIGN POLICY. IF HE FAILS TO DO SO, THE OUTLOOK FOR HIS REGIME IS UNPROMISING.

7. THE SOVIETS HAVE AGAIN POSTPONED THE VISIT TO CAIRO OF DEPUTY FOREIGN TRADE MINISTER GRISHIN TO DISCUSS THE 1977 EGYPTIAN-SOVIET TRADE PROTOCOL AND THE RENEGOTIATION OF EGYPT'S DEBT. NO NEW DATE HAS BEEN SET FOR THE VISIT, WHICH HAS ALREADY BEEN POSTPONED SEVERAL TIMES. THE SOVIETS ARE CERTAINLY MIFFED AT THE HEAVY PROPAGANDA ATTACKS IN THE CAIRO PRESS IMPLYING THAT MOSCOW SOMEHOW HAD A HAND IN LAST WEEK'S RIOTS. THE USSR IS UNDOUBTEDLY IN NO MOOD TO BE CONCILIATORY TO DEBT NEGOTIATIONS AND PROBABLY ANTICIPATES THAT, IN THE PRESENT ATMOSPHERE. EGYPT TOO IS UNLIKELY TO BACK DOWN FROM ITS HARD-LINE
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POSITION. (CONFIDENTIAL)

8. PALESTINIANS. PLO OFFICIAL HANI AL-HASSAN SAID YESTERDAY THAT A RECONCILIATION BETWEEN JORDAN AND THE PLO "MIGHT TAKE SOME TIME." HE SATED THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE A SINGLE BILATERAL MEETING WOULD PRODUCE RESULTS; INSTEAD, THE PROCESS WOULD ENTAIL "A LONG AND ARDUOUS DIALOGUE." HE ADDED THAT A PLO-JORDANIAN RAPPROACHMENT MUST BE FOUNDED ON THE 1974 RABAT SUMMIT DECISION RECOGNIZING THE PLO AS THE SOLE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PALESTINIANS. AL-HASAN HAS THUS FAR PLAYED A CENTRAL ROLE IN EFFORTS TO BEGIN JORDANIAN-PLO DISCUSSIONS AIMED AT A RECONCILIATION. (LIMITED OFFICIAL USE)
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